

CAMBRIDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Title: *POST SHOOTING / TRAUMATIC INCIDENT* **Procedure:** 2.001

Date Issued:

Revised:

PURPOSE:

It is the policy of the Police Department to provide guidelines that shall be uniformly applied following any officer-involved shooting or use of force incident that has resulted in death or serious physical injury, in order to minimize the chances that involved personnel will develop or suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

POLICY:

Law enforcement duties can often expose officers and support personnel to mentally painful and highly stressful situations that cannot be resolved through normal stress coping mechanisms. Unless adequately treated, these situations can cause disabling emotional and physical problems. It has been found that officer-involved shootings resulting in death or serious bodily injury to a citizen or a fellow officer may precipitate such stress disorders. It is the responsibility of the Police Department to provide personnel with information on stress disorders and to guide and assist in their deterrence. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Police Department to take immediate action after such incidents to safeguard the continued good mental health of all affected personnel.

DEFINITIONS:

1. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:** An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to short term severe stress, or the long-term buildup of repetitive and prolonged milder stress.

2. **Officer Involved Shooting Incident:** An incident where shooting causes death or serious physical injury to an officer or other person.

3. **Officer Involved Traumatic Incident:** An incident where the use of force, (other than firearm) causes death or serious physical injury to an officer or another person.

4. **Officer Involved Traumatic Traffic Crash:** An incident where through the use of police vehicle, death or physical injury to an officer or another person occurs.

PROCEDURES:

HANDLING OF THE OFFICERS AT THE SCENE

1. During any period where the involved officer(s) is required to remain on the scene, but has no immediate duties to fulfill, the officer(s) should be taken to a quiet area away from the scene of the incident. A peer counselor or other supportive friend or officer should remain with the officer(s), but should be advised not to discuss details of the incident.

2. The supervisor should arrange for the officer(s) directly involved in the incident to leave the scene as soon as possible, and be taken to a quiet, secure setting.

3. Where possible, the supervisor shall briefly meet with the involved officer(s).

No stimulants or depressants should be given to the officer(s) unless administered by medical personnel.

Only minimal, preliminary questions should be asked about the incident. The officer(s) should be advised that a more detailed debriefing will be conducted at a later time.

Any standard investigations that will occur concerning the incident should be discussed with the officer(s).

The officer(s) should be advised that they may seek legal counsel.

The officer(s) should be advised not to discuss the incident with anyone except a personal or Department attorney, or departmental investigator, until the conclusion of the preliminary investigation.

4. The supervisor shall require that the officer's duty weapon be taken for analysis. When the duty weapon is taken, the supervisor shall:

Take custody of the officer's weapon in a discrete manner; and

Advise the officer it will be returned at a later date, as appropriate.

POST-INCIDENT PROCEDURES

1. All officers directly involved in the shooting or traumatic incident shall be required to contact a Department designated specialist for counseling and evaluation as soon as practical after the incident. Other affected support personnel should also be encouraged to contact such specialists after a shooting or traumatic incident. After the counseling sessions, the specialist shall advise the Department:

Whether it would be in the officers' best interest to be placed on administrative leave or administrative assignment, and for how long;

issues regarding the officer's physical and mental fitness for duty; and

what will be the best continued course of counseling.

2. If the officer disagrees with the initial Department designated specialist he may seek two additional opinions at Department expense.

3. The Department strongly encourages the families of the involved officers to take advantage of available counseling services.

4. The Department should brief other agency members concerning the incident so that rumors are kept to a minimum. Agency members are encouraged to show the involved officer(s) their concern.

5. All personnel involved in a shooting or traumatic incident should be advised that they are not permitted to speak with the media about the incident. Officers shall refer inquiries from the media to a designated agency spokesperson.

6. In order to protect against crank or abusive calls, officers should be advised to have phone calls answered by another person for several days should their names be released to the public.

DAILY STRESS RECOGNITION

1. As post-traumatic stress disorders may not arise immediately, or the officer(s) may attempt to hide the problem, each supervisor is responsible for monitoring the behavior of unit members for symptoms of the disorder.

2. The Chief of Police or his designee may order an officer to seek assistance or counseling from a mental health specialist upon a reasonable belief that stress may be disrupting the officer's job performance.